PRESS RELEASE

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TOPFREE SEVEN TRIAL

Rochester, N.Y. The trial of seven women who challenged the New York State Law which requires women, but not men, to cover their chests in public will start Monday, September 15, in the courtroom of City Court Judge Herman Walz in Rochester's Hall of Justice. Topfree Seven members Nikki Craft, Kathie Reilly, Ramona Santorelli, Mary Lou Schloss, Deborah Seymour, Elise Tooley, and Lynn Zicari are charged with violating the "Exposure of a Person" law by removing their shirts in Cobbs Hill Park last June 21. The trial is scheduled for three days, September 15 - 17.

The Topfree Seven contend that the law is unconstitutional since it denies women the equal protection of the law guaranteed by the United States and New York State constitutions. The government has no substantial interest which would justify requiring women, but not men, to cover their chests. In fact, this form of discrimination against women interferes with important government interests. Adverse effects include:

1. Damage to women's body self-concepts and physical and mental health.
2. An unhealthy obsession with breasts as sexual objects which interferes with the formation of relationships of equality between men and women.
3. Reluctance to breastfeed infants.

The Topfree Seven also challenge the constitutionality of the "Exposure of a Person" law on the grounds that it is vague and not consistently enforced and that it inhibits freedom of expression.

Expert witnesses expected to testify as part of the defense include:

1. Dana Raphael, Ph.D. - Cultural-Medical Anthropologist, Author, Human Lactation Center (Westport, CT.)
2. Marilyn Story, Ph.D. - Psychologist, University of Northern Iowa
3. Stephen Ray, M.D. - Breast Surgeon, Genesee Hospital
4. Melissa Farley, Ph.D. - Psychologist, University of Iowa
5. Lee Baxandall, Bern Loibl, Morley Schloss & Nina Silver - Coordinators, Authors, The Naturist Society
6. The Topfree Seven

Attorneys for the Topfree Seven are Lawrence Kasperek, Assistant Public Defender, representing Ramona Santorelli, and David Moss, representing five of the women. Mary Lou Schloss will represent herself.

At the arraignment of the Topfree Seven, City Court Judge Herman Walz stated that this trial will raise important constitutional issues which he intends to consider seriously.

When a woman appears at a Rochester beach or park on a hot summer day surrounded by shirtless men, her bathing suit top or shirt is a clear badge of inequality. In 1936, fifty years ago, New York State courts began to allow men to appear in public without shirts. The Topfree Seven trial may help make 1986 the year of topfree equality for all.